

FUNCTION OF THE RECORDS SURVEY (RM-19 FORM)

The purpose of the records survey is to identify and quantify all records created and maintained by your agency or locality in order to create a specific records retention and disposition schedule. Without an accurate, functioning records retention and disposition schedule, an agency or locality can not legally destroy records in its possession. The survey identifies and defines a set of records, any restrictions to access, the length of time those documents should be retained, and the manner of disposition or destruction. By completing the survey, your analyst can help identify records that are still in active use, records that have become inactive and may be transferred to less expensive storage facilities, vital records that need off-site security backup, historically valuable records that can be transferred to the Library of Virginia's Archives, and records that no longer need to be retained.

Multiple records may be grouped on the survey as a "records series." A records series is a group of records normally used or filed as a unit that relate to a particular subject or result from the same activity. An easy way to understand the records series concept is to consider the progression of information units in records management. The smallest unit is the individual page or document. The next largest unit is the file, which consists of related documents. Finally, the records series—groups of related files—is the largest unit and is the level at which records surveys are performed.

According to the [Virginia Public Records Act](#) (*Code of Virginia*, §42.1-76 et seq.), a "public record" is defined as "recorded information that documents a transaction or activity by or with any public officer, agency or employee of an agency," regardless of physical form or characteristic. Therefore, records surveys incorporate all media types including, but not limited to, paper records, CDs, magnetic tapes, microfilm, maps, and drawings. A records series may incorporate multiple formats (e.g., paper files and a database).

Certain kinds of materials maintained by agencies are not considered records. These materials include blank forms, publications used for reference purposes, and convenience copies of documents produced solely for ease of reference. Materials identified as non-records should not be included in the records survey.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE RECORDS SURVEY (RM-19 FORM)

- 1-3 **Agency/Locality, Division/Department, Section/Sub-Unit:** Provide the full and unabbreviated name of the state agency or locality that maintains the records described in the survey. Also provide the full name of the division/department and section/sub-unit that creates, uses, and maintains the records series, if applicable.
- 4-6 **Contact Person, Telephone Number and Extension, E-mail Address:** Provide the name, telephone number (including the extension, if applicable), and e-mail address of the individual knowledgeable about the records series.
7. **Records Series Title:** Determine a specific, descriptive title for the records series. Titles should identify the subject and/or function of the records. Please clarify all acronyms on the first usage. For example:
- Judgment and Docket Records
 - Student Advisory Committee (SAC) Applications
 - Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Monitoring Reports
8. **Date Range of Records:** Provide the dates of the records from the earliest to the most recent, regardless of their location. Use "ca." for circa, meaning "approximately," when exact dates cannot be determined.
9. **Series Status:** Indicate whether the purpose of the records survey is to update an existing records series or to create a new series. If updating a records series, provide the existing records series number in the space provided.
10. **Series Still in Use?** Indicate whether or not the series is still in use.
11. **Description:** Describe the purpose of the records series, indicating what actions are documented by the series, how the actions relate to the office and its operation, who creates the records, and who uses the records. Please include a broad list of the types of documents in a series (forms, correspondence, reports, notes, etc.) and describe the nature of the information recorded in the documents. The concise description should be clear to those unfamiliar with the particular operation documented by the records. Technical jargon or unexplained abbreviations should be avoided. Sample series descriptions:
- **Judgment and Docket Records:** This series documents scheduling, judgment, and docketing information on individual cases. The information in this series is used to track cases from filing through docketing in courts throughout the commonwealth and United States. This information is also used to verify judgment and docketing information to release liens. Documents include correspondence, abstracts, spreadsheets, and scheduling information.
 - **Student Advisory Committee (SAC) Applications:** The Student Advisory Committee is a committee of the Board of Education made up of 12 students from across the state. The students must submit an application to be considered for selection for the committee. The applications include personally identifiable information, such as home address, telephone number, school, grade level, recommendations, school transcripts, etc. The students remain on the committee during the school year. Once their terms are up, their recommendations to the board are included in the minutes of the Board of Education and their applications are of no further use.
 - **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Monitoring Reports:** These records permanently document the periodic Monitoring Reports for the Baseline Documentation Reports of Deeds of Open-Space Easements recorded in counties throughout Virginia. These easements are part of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program administered by the Virginia Department of Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Division of Soil and Water Conservation. Copies of the deeds will be included in the reports. The easement land will be monitored periodically in order to evaluate and determine that the terms of the deeds of easement are being upheld. These Monitoring Reports will compare the conditions of the land at the time of evaluation to the conditions at the time the deed was originally recorded.

12. **File Arrangement:** Describe the organization of the records. Check all descriptions that apply and clarify where necessary. For example:
- Alphabetically by agency name
 - Chronologically by year of graduation, then alphabetically by student name
 - Numerically by tax parcel number, then by document type (blueprints, permits, specifications)
13. **Records Cut Off By:** To cut off records means to break, or end, them at regular intervals to permit their disposal or transfer in complete blocks. Typically, the cut off is used to separate active from inactive records. Indicate how often the records are cut off. If there is no file cut off, the series is continuous.
14. **Frequency of Use:** Determining frequency of use helps to establish when a records series transitions from active to less active or inactive. Rate the frequency of use of the records series by placing it in one of four categories: daily, weekly, monthly, or less often.
15. **Are These Vital Records?** Vital records contain information required by an agency to function or to reestablish operations immediately in the event of a disaster. If records are vital, they may have special storage or reformatting considerations. Do not confuse “vital records” with “vital statistic” records such as birth, death, and marriage certificates. Examples of vital records are current tax receipts, ongoing contracts, payrolls, and land and student records.
16. **Records Medium:** A particular records series may include multiple formats. Indicate all formats that apply. Paper records can include loose documents, bound volumes, photographs, architectural drawings, and maps. Electronic records can include word-processed files, databases, electronic spreadsheets, geographic information system (GIS) records, and computer-aided design (CAD) records. Audiovisual records can include information stored on audio and video tapes, compact discs (CDs), and digital video discs (DVDs). In the explanation, please provide further details regarding the:
- Size of the paper
 - Type of microform
 - Formats and storage media for electronic or audiovisual media
17. **Annual Accumulation of Records in All Locations:** Provide an **estimate** of the volume of records created, received, and retained in the course of a year for the series in question. Express the approximate volume of records in cubic feet where possible. When inventorying electronic, audiovisual, microform, cartographic, and related records, also provide an item count (e.g., 1200 prints, 3500 negatives) where appropriate.
- Use the [Volume Estimation Table](#) to determine cubic footage of physical records. Electronic records should be measured in bytes, kilobytes, megabytes, gigabytes, or terabytes, whichever is appropriate. To determine size for electronic records, right-click on the file or folder and choose “Properties.” Size is located under the “General” tab.
18. **Total Accumulation of Records in All Locations:** Provide an estimate of the total volume of records, from the earliest to the most recent, in all storage locations. Use the same methods for estimating volume as described above.
19. **Cite any authority governing creation, management, retention, and/or disposition of series:** Note any agency, state, or federal law, regulation, or policy and attach a copy of the appropriate citation(s). For example, state or federal laws or regulations that:
- Mandate the creation of the series
 - Authorize the activity that results in the creation of the activity
 - Require the retention of the series for a specific period of time
 - Require a particular disposal method
20. **Access to Records:** Indicate whether any state or federal regulations restrict access to the records. For example:
- Government Data Collection and Dissemination Practices Act (*Code of Virginia*, §2.2-3800)
 - Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
 - Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
 - Freedom of Information Act (*Code of Virginia*, §2.2-3700 et seq.). For FOIA exemptions please include the specific provision (e.g., 2.2-3705.7(1)).

21. **Recommended Retention and Disposition:** Based on the legal, administrative, and financial value of these records, suggest a length of retention and identify the event that triggers the retention countdown. Additionally, you can identify where the records are to be retained and whether or not they will be microfilmed or digitized. For records that are not permanent, indicate the disposition method to be used at the end of the retention period.
22. **Explanation of Requested Retention and Disposition:** Please explain the basis of your suggested retention period. Describe any agency or locality work processes that make the requested retention necessary.
- 23, 24 **Survey Conducted By, Date of Survey:** Enter the name of the person who completed the survey form and the date it was conducted.